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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000217

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STATE FOR EUR/SE, SCA/FO, SCA/A

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TURKEY FEARS IMPACT OF DOSTUM ARREST;  
HIKMET CETIN "READY" TO SERVE AS UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

REF: A. KABUL 303

[1](#)B. STATE 9757

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4 b, d

[1](#)1. (C) MFA U/S Apakan called Ambassador February 5 to relay concerns about Uzbek strongman Abdul Rashid Dostum. Apakan said he had information that Afghan police might soon arrest Dostum (ref A). The GOT believed his arrest would be counterproductive; every effort should be made to use him on behalf of Afghan unity, given his history of fighting the Taliban. He has made mistakes, but pushing him away will be harmful to stability in the north. Apakan added that if Turkey was misinformed about Dostum or misunderstood the situation, it was prepared to take matters up with him to correct things. The Turkish Charge was instructed to convey Ankara's concerns to the Afghan authorities. Separately, the Turks are cautioning Dostum to lay low and keep quiet.

[1](#)2. (C) We followed up with MFA South Asia Head of Department Devrim Ozturk on February 7, describing Dostum's recent behavior as counterproductive and stressing the potential for damage to the Karzai government's ability to establish rule of law in Afghanistan. Turkey had earlier provided assurances to us that Dostum would restrain himself, support the Karzai government, and begin to recede into the background of Junbesh politics. The February 2 incident was evidence that Dostum has not tempered his behavior, and his party congress has not yet taken place.

[1](#)3. (C) With MFA's senior South Asia officials accompanying FM Babacan to India this week, Ozturk was only prepared to reiterate the standard GOT line: Dostum has his faults, but is a uniting figure, essential to security in the north. If he is arrested, it would upset "balances" and there would be demonstrations, as were already occurring in the north when the GOT heard of Dostum's impending arrest. That apparently urgent situation -- now defused -- occasioned U/S Apakan's call to the Ambassador. The GOT's understanding of the sequence of events matched ours. Turkey's support for Dostum is not unconditional and Turkey will again warn him to knock it off. The GOT is disappointed the Junbesh Congress continues to be delayed; Dostum says it will happen soon. Ozturk had no information on whether Dostum might be enticed to come to Turkey or, he mentioned, leave for Uzbekistan.

UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN:  
HIKMET CETIN READY IF CALLED UPON  
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14. (C) The GOT still views former NATO Afghanistan Senior Civilian Representative Hikmet Cetin as suitable for the UN Afghanistan Special Representative post (ref B). The GOT is prepared to advance him as a consensus candidate, but not without the support of the United States and other allies, and not without an expanded mandate. The GOT believes he is an internationally respected figure with good Afghanistan experience, and acceptable to Karzai. Ozturk has heard from Turkey's UN Mission in New York that Russia might be prepared to advance Cetin's name.

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